

Neighbors can prevail against crime when property is shut down

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The disconnect between laws on the book and reduction of crime is a longtime civic frustration.



This week Superior Court Judge Peggy Ableman bridged that divide with a temporary order to shut down a property in Wilmington's Canby Park neighborhood that police declared to be a nuisance.

It was the first time a Wilmington house has been shuttered under the state's nuisance abatement law. It was the third time a house has been closed by court order since Attorney General Beau Biden pushed to enhance the Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act. Senate Bill 80 allows use of history and severity of the activity as grounds to permanently shut down nuisance [businesses](#), rental units and homes.

The 1014 Rodman Road row house was a known haven for drug trafficking and prostitution. Neighbors had to be evacuated from their properties after a live grenade was discovered.

Until a hearing can be held to determine what should be done, owner William Murphy has to vacate his home.

And this is as it should be.

Judging from police records and neighbors' complaints, Mr. Murphy has been unwilling or unable to change the criminal events on this part of Rodman Road.

Senate Bill 80 sets forth assistance for property owners overwhelmed by nearby criminal activity. It allows the Attorney General's Office to help property owners devise a stringent plan of compliance to continue in [business](#) or keep their homes.

Obviously Judge Ableman understood that this owner couldn't overcome the burden his property created, even with the availability of such support. Her decision led to the best option for Mr. Murphy's neighbors and the community.